

Thank you Representative Fleischman, Senator Stillman and Education Committee Members for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Megan Schrade, I am the parent of a 7 year old dyslexic child named Luke. I am in support of Bill No. 5562, An Act Concerning Special Education.

My son, Luke, was diagnosed with Dyslexia last year when he was in the 1st grade. Having worked in the field of Special Education, I was concerned about certain aspects of my son's development since he was in preschool. I even questioned whether or not he could be dyslexic at that young age. I knew he wasn't learning the letters of the alphabet the way most children his age were, he didn't consistently recognize his own name in print, he didn't seem to catch on to the concept of rhyming, and he seemed to have an aversion to writing and drawing. These things became more noticeable and problematic as he entered school, and he received reading intervention in kindergarten and 1st grade. Both schools he attended (we moved prior to the start of 1st grade) used Wilson Foundations, and his intervention consisted of more intensive work with this program in the context of a small group. By mid 1st grade, he was still significantly behind his peers in reading, and his teachers and I agreed that the current protocol was not enough for him.

When I told his teacher and reading tutor that I suspected he was dyslexic, they replied that most children are not identified as dyslexic until 3rd or 4th grade, and they would continue to watch him and monitor his progress. I knew I could have him privately tested, and despite the fact that it did not come at the best time financially for us, we decided to have him tested at the cost of \$1800. This was a difficult decision on our part, and one that many families are not in the position to make, but we wanted him to have a clear diagnosis, so he could begin to get the right type of intervention. He was diagnosed as having severe Dyslexia at 6 years old. However, I was told by the clinician who tested him that the earliest a child could be identified with Dyslexia is at 4 years 9mo of age. Considering I had been concerned since he was in preschool, he could've been identified much earlier than he was, and certainly much earlier than 3rd or 4th grade, as suggested by his teachers. This lack of professional awareness needs to be addressed in order to get dyslexic students on the right path to learning as quickly as possible.

I was actually happy when he was diagnosed, because I thought, now we could begin to fix it. However, I learned that even though we had a diagnosis, the school could only list him as having a "Specific Learning Disability" because the law does not currently require Dyslexia to be recognized specifically on a child's IEP. A designation of "SLD/Dyslexia" on the IEP form should engage the PPT team in a conversation as to appropriate evidenced based programming for a dyslexic student.

When you take into account that Dyslexia affects 20% of the population, that is 1 in 5 children, the potential cost to school systems by ignoring or under-identifying these students in the early grades is considerable as the longer you wait for interventions, the longer the intervention will take.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Megan Schrade  
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